

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 74

May 20, 1997, 8:17 pm
Page S-4745 Temp. Record

BUDGET RESOLUTION/No Tax Cuts or Spending Increases

SUBJECT: Senate Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal years 1998-2002 . . . S.Con. Res. 27. Hollings amendment No. 295.

ACTION: AMENDMENT REJECTED, 8-91

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. Con Res. 27, the Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal year 1998, will balance the Federal budget in fiscal year (FY) 2002 by slowing the overall rate of growth in spending over the next 5 years to below the rate of growth in revenue collections (the Congressional Budget Office recently revised upwards its 5-year revenue estimate by \$225 billion).

The Hollings amendment would add the following, "Notwithstanding any other provision of this resolution, all function levels, allocations, aggregates, and reconciliation instructions in this resolution shall be adjusted to reflect elimination of tax cuts of \$85 billion from baseline levels and elimination of Presidential initiatives of \$31.2 billion and interest savings of \$13.8 billion for a total saving of \$130 billion over 5 years."

Those favoring the amendment contended:

The Hollings amendment is a sunshine amendment. It will not have any effect because it does not have any chance of passing. We have offered it solely to shed a little light on the outrageous charade that both parties have been engaging in for the past 15 years. That charade is that Social Security surpluses, and other trust fund surpluses to a lesser extent, have been used to mask the true size of the deficit. In the early 1980s, Congress and the President acted to save the Social Security Program when it nearly went bankrupt. They did not enact a short-term fix; they noted that the number of Social Security beneficiaries in the next century was projected to increase tremendously and the number of workers paying into the system was expected to decrease, and they therefore enacted changes to build up huge surpluses for when that change occurred. Their plan has worked admirably except for one detail: Congress and the President have spent every penny of the surpluses that have been generated. Under this budget resolution, they will continue

(See other side)

YEAS (8)		NAYS (91)				NOT VOTING (1)	
Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (8 or 18%)	Republicans (55 or 100%)		Democrats (36 or 82%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (1)
	Byrd	Abraham	Hutchinson	Akaka	Kennedy		Harkin- ²
	Conrad	Allard	Hutchison	Baucus	Kerrey		
	Dorgan	Ashcroft	Inhofe	Biden	Kerry		
	Feingold	Bennett	Jeffords	Bingaman	Kohl		
	Hollings	Bond	Kemphorne	Boxer	Landrieu		
	Moynihan	Brownback	Kyl	Breaux	Lautenberg		
	Reid	Burns	Lott	Bryan	Leahy		
	Robb	Campbell	Lugar	Bumpers	Levin		
		Chafee	Mack	Cleland	Lieberman		
		Coats	McCain	Daschle	Mikulski		
		Cochran	McConnell	Dodd	Moseley-Braun		
		Collins	Murkowski	Durbin	Murray		
		Coverdell	Nickles	Feinstein	Reed		
		Craig	Roberts	Ford	Rockefeller		
		D'Amato	Roth	Glenn	Sarbanes		
		DeWine	Santorum	Graham	Torricelli		
		Domenici	Sessions	Inouye	Wellstone		
		Enzi	Shelby	Johnson	Wyden		
		Faircloth	Smith, Bob				
		Frist	Smith, Gordon				
		Gorton	Snowe				
		Gramm	Specter				
		Grams	Stevens				
		Grassley	Thomas				
		Gregg	Thompson				
		Hagel	Thurmond				
		Hatch	Warner				
		Helms					

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

to do so. When Social Security starts taking in less than it spends in about 2011, it will have to dip into its surpluses, which will be nothing but a bunch of IOUs from the Federal Government. The Federal Government will then have to tax working Americans to pay for their retirement. What is the point of having a trust fund to save money if nothing is really saved? As long as we continue on this path, the trust fund is nothing but a gimmick, an outrageous fraud on the American people.

We have an opportunity for redemption. The economy is doing so well (and those of us who are Democrats who voted for the tax increases in 1993 take special satisfaction that those increases did not sink the economy as our Republican colleagues said they would) that if we would just do nothing but pass last year's budget for the next few years we would be able to balance the budget without raiding Social Security. Our Republican colleagues advanced an amendment to that effect just a few days ago as a fail-safe plan in case no budget deal could be reached; here is their chance to make it their official plan.

We know that neither they nor our Democratic colleagues will take that chance. We are disappointed that the Senate is abandoning its traditional role of being the true conservative branch of the Federal Government. We recall in 1985 when Senate Republicans went so far as to bring Senator Wilson in on a stretcher in order to win a difficult vote on fiscal responsibility, and we also recall Senator Dole's disgust at that vote being negated when then-President Reagan agreed to greater Social Security spending in return for then-Speaker O'Neil's agreeing to greater defense spending. Where is the conservative Senate leadership today, when we have a deal between President Clinton demanding social spending and House Republicans demanding tax cuts? True conservatives, both Republican and Democrat, should reject this deal. We have a chance to make America solvent, and to protect Social Security, for decades to come just by voting for the Hollings amendment. Sadly, we know this amendment will be defeated.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

It would really be nice if all the numbers added up just the way that we wanted. We would love to have trillions of dollars to spend on legitimate and necessary, and even frivolous, Government functions without imposing any tax burdens on the American people. We would love to run surpluses in each and every year, and have carefully segregated trust funds. Unfortunately, we do not live in fantasyland, which makes our jobs as legislators quite a bit more difficult. Most of the tax relief in this budget resolution will go to increase the size of the child tax credit. Working families desperately need some relief from the crushing tax burden they are under, which is at a record-high level. Families in America are disintegrating, and those that remain are having to shoulder an ever-greater share of the burden of paying for the Government. Social spending in America has been stagnant in recent years as well. People are in need, and they should be helped. We do not mean we should expand traditional programs of dependency--instead, we favor programs like educational assistance and the welfare reform bill of last year that will help lift people out of poverty into productive lives. This resolution advocates tax relief and new spending because those are justifiable priorities that are widely supported by Members and the President. At the same time, the resolution is anything but irresponsible. It will achieve a true, unified budget balance in the year 2002. Much of the savings will come from reforms to entitlement programs. Our colleagues do not think that is enough. They say that we should run a surplus each year equal to the amount that Social Security runs a surplus. In effect, they want us to begin paying down the debt right now so that when Social Security starts to dip into its surpluses (which are saved as Treasury bonds) it will be easier to borrow money to redeem those bonds. There is no right or wrong to this debate. It all comes down to opinions on what our priorities should be. We say that this budget resolution has followed the traditional course of every balanced budget proposal ever submitted, whether by Democrats or Republicans or both, in that it balances all receipts against all expenditures, including Social Security receipts and expenditures. We say also that this resolution is much more honest than most (though not all) of the previous proposals in that it uses the most conservative estimates possible and it restrains entitlement spending, which is the part of the budget that is out of control. Our colleagues say that this effort is not enough; they want more deficit reduction at the expense of ignoring other priorities in spending and tax relief. We respectfully disagree, and urge our colleagues to reject this amendment.